

NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5699
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PHILIPPINES ELECTION AND THE MEDIA

ANNCR :

AS VOTERS PREPARE TO GO (WENT) TO THE POLLS FRIDAY IN THE PHILIPPINES FIRST NATIONAL ELECTION OF THIS DECADE, THE JUST CONCLUDED CAMPAIGN FOR AN INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PROVIDES AN INTERESTING POLITICAL STUDY FOR FOREIGN JOURNALISTS AND OTHER OBSERVERS. JIM MILLER HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT FROM MANILA. VOICE:

WESTERN REPORTERS ARE REGULARLY CRITICIZED HERE, AS THEY ARE IN MANY OTHER THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES, FOR WHAT IS CONSIDERED HEAVILY NEGATIVE COVERAGE OF FILIPINO AFFAIRS. THE MEDIA IN THE PHILIPPINES HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY SENSITIVE TO FOREIGN REPORTING DURING THE FORTY FIVE DAY ELECTION CAMPAIGN. YET MANY FOREIGN JOURNALISTS HAVE BEEN STRUCK HERE BY WHAT THEY JUDGE AS AN ETHICALLY QUESTIONABLE EFFORT BY THE PHILIPPINES MEDIA TO SUPPORT GOVERNMENT CANDIDATES AND RELATIVELY IGNORE THOSE OF THE OPPOSITION.

FOR EXAMPLE, A PUBLIC SERVICE TELEVISION COMMERCIAL ON HOW TO FILL OUT THE RATHER COMPLICATED BALLOT FEATURED THE GOVERNMENT'S CANDIDATE LIST PROMINENTLY HEADED BY MISSUS IMELDA MARCOS, WIFE OF THE PRESIDENT. ON WEDNESDAY NIGHT, MISTER MARCOS MONOPOLIZED THE NATION'S TELEVISION AND RADIO OUTLETS FOR FOUR FULL HOURS WITH WHAT WAS DESCRIBED AS A DIALOGUE WITH THE PEOPLE. IN REALITY IT PROVIDED THE PRESIDENT WITH A FINAL OPPORTUNITY TO URGE THE VOTERS TO SUPPORT HIM, HIS PROGRAM AND HIS CANDIDATES. UNDER PHILIPPINES LAW, THE OPPOSITION HAS NO RECOURSE IN THIS CIRCUMSTANCE TO DEMAND EQUAL TIME, EVEN THOUGH MISTER MARCOS

AND HIS PARTY DID NOT PAY FOR THIS BLANKET COVERAGE OF THE NATION.

IN THE FINAL TWO WEEKS OF THE CAMPAIGN, THE MAJOR PRESS OF THE PHILIPPINES RAN A DAILY FRONT PAGE SERIES BYLINED BY MRS. MARCOS IN WHICH SHE REVIEWED HER ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS GOVERNOR OF THE METROPOLITAN MANILA AREA. IN ALL, THE COVERAGE GIVEN THE MARCOS FORCES DURING THE CAMPAIGN DWARFED THAT GIVEN TO THE OPPOSITION BY ABOUT A SEVEN TO ONE MARGIN.

JS/RCS